

Message Text

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ACTION EB-03

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2623

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 1395

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG KU

SUBJECT: GULF/BP TALKS WITH GOK

REF: KUWAIT 1337

1. WITH ARRIVAL IN KUWAIT OF CHAIRMAN OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BP TRADING COMPANY JOHN SUTCLIFFE, GOK-BP/GULF NEGOTIATIONS HAVE MOVED INTO HIGH GEAR. DURING MINFINANCE ATEEQI'S CALL TO AMBASSADOR MAR 29 ON ANOTHER MATTER, AMBASSADOR TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO MENTION TO HIM, AS FORMER OIL MINISTER AS WELL, GULF AND BP'S DISTRESS, REALLY, AT SUDDENNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOK DEMANDS FOR NEW ARRANGEMENTS WITH COMPANIES. KUWAITI ATTITUDE, COMPANIES FELT, WAS NOT IN KEEPING WITH TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION SHOWN BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES IN THE PAST. "TELL THEM TO BE PATIENT AND RELAX", ATEEQI REPLIED. THERE WERE THOSE, HE ADDED, INCLUDING HIMSELF, WHO WERE WORKING QUIETLY FOR DEAL THAT WOULD BE SATISFACTORY ALL AROUND AND INVOLVED CONTINUED LONG-TERM ASSOCIATION OF GULF AND BP WITH KUWAIT. (AMBASSADOR PASSED THSE REMARKS TO RALSTON OF GULF FEW MINUTES
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LATER.)

2. IN KEEPING WITH THE FOREGOING, EMBOFF WAS TOLD MARCH 28 BY SENIOR GULF OFFICIAL THAT ATMOSPHERE HAS IMPROVED NOTICEABLY. HE SAID COMPANY OFFICIALS MET WITH CROWN PRINCE/PRIME MINISTER WHO DID NOT MAKE ANY SPECIFIC CONCESSIONS, BUT HE APPARENTLY ASSURED COMPANIES THAT GOK WOULD BE MORE FLEXIBLE AND POSITIVE THAN HAD BEEN INDICATED PREVIOUSLY. SIMILAR ASSURANCES WERE GIVEN BY MINISTRY OF OIL OFFICIAL ALSO.

3. COMMENT: WE HAVE NO SPECIFIC INFORMATION REGARDING CHANGES IN GOK SUBSTANTIVE POSITION, BUT FOR FIRST TIME SINCE TALKS BEGAN OVER A MONTH AGO COMPANY REPS PERMITTING THEMSELVES SOME FEELING OF OPTIMISM. RALSTON TOLD AMBASSADOR HE IN NO HURRY LEAVE KUWAIT AND WILLING STAY AS LONG AS NECESSARY TO OBTAIN SATISFACTORY DEAL. STOLTZFUS

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